

Office of Homeland Security Moves to JSU E-Center

One of Governor Haley Barbour's initial acts as Mississippi's 63rd Governor was to make the Mississippi Office of Homeland Security (OHS) a division of the Department of Public Safety. A transition team was set-up and moved into DPS Headquarters. The team was made up of OHS personnel from the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (OHS's former parent agency) and DPS staffers. In May, Commissioner Fortenberry announced the hiring of retiring Mississippi FBI Field Office Special-Agent-in-Charge, Ed Worthington. "Ed was in a unique position. He was able to start from scratch and craft OHS. He literally began with little more than a desk and chair and has developed an entity that we can all be proud of," said Public Safety Commissioner Rusty Fortenberry.



Entrance to the new Office of Homeland Security

During Fiscal Year 2004, OHS has administered \$29 million in federal homeland security grants to state agencies and local governments. "We relied heavily on the members of our staff who moved from MEMA to our office. It was because of their institutional knowledge that we were able to distribute that much money in a relatively short period of time. My hat is off to those individuals as I extend my deepest gratitude to them," said Worthington.



Exterior of OHS at Jackson State's E-Center on Raymond Road in South Jackson

As part of its development, OHS recently moved from DPS Headquarters to the Jackson State University E-Center. "This is a wonderful fit for us. It is a facility that offers many needed features, such as a high level of security, and other tenants in the building that offer high tech resources that we hope to partner with in the future," said Worthington.

OHS recently introduced its Website at www.homelandsecurity.ms.gov. The OHS Website is updated with the latest news from Washington and offers anyone a means to report suspicious activity through an on-line report that can be submitted via the Internet. "The Website is a tool we will use not only to disseminate information but also to receive information regarding threats to our security," Worthington added. The OHS homepage will offer links to the latest information regarding OHS efforts in Mississippi. A visitor of the site can download information about federal homeland security grants, alert updates, press releases, etc.

In October, OHS will introduce another information gathering tool, a toll-free tip line. "The public is our eyes and ears. Anything we can do to facilitate the gathering of information will allow us to get that information to the proper authorities so that we can best protect our citizens and we'll all benefit if we make the process as easy as possible," said Worthington.



OHS lobby area (above) and a conference and waiting area (below).

